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A
S E R M O N

Upon the First PETITION

I N

The Lord's Prayer.

Preach'd at

St. *Paul's* Covent-Garden,

The last Sunday in *November*.

By HENRY TOPPING, A. M. Lecturer
of that Parish, and Chaplain to the
Lord Bishop of *London*.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *James Knapton*, at the *Crown*
in *St. Paul's* Church-Yard, 1719.

Price Four Pence.

MEMORANDUM

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IN

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By Henry T. ...
of that Parish ...
Lord Bishop ...



LONDON:

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Printed for ...



TO
Sir Nicholas Garrard
Baronett,

OF
East-Ham, *in* Essex.

S I R,



E pleased to accept a
Discourse relating to
the Liturgy, which was
A 3 Preached

The Epistle

*Preached before You. Such
kind of Subjects must always
meet with Favour from You
and your Vertuous Lady, whose
Piety is well known, and your
Esteem for the Book of Com-
mon - Prayer, and your
heartly Affection for the
Church of England.*

*YOUR Good Example ought
to be spoken of, who are Con-
stant at Divine Service up-
on all the Festivals, obser-
ving our Decent Orders, At-
tending with Devotion, and re-
garding*

Dedicatory.

*guarding the Sense and Meaning
of our Prayers.*

THE Clergy Pray for your
Long Life, and are Thankful
for your Encouragement : You
Excuse the Failings of All,
Relieve the Necessities of
Some, and Forgive the strange
Conduct of Others, respecting
for Christ's sake the whole
Order in general.

MY Obligations are more
particular ; but since my Health
detaiⁿeth me from your Family,
per-

The Epistle, &c.

permit me in this publick manner to express my Gratitude.

I am

Honoured Sir,

Your most Obedient

Humble Servant

Henry Topping.

MATTH.



MATTH. VI. ix.

*Our Father which art in Heaven,
blessed be thy Name.*



HE first sentence, *Our Father which art in Heaven*, is a Preface or Introduction to the Prayer that follows; the meaning of which Preface is this, that like as a Father gives ear to the complaints of his Children, is willing to relieve all their real wants and necessitys, so the Father of all Mankind will listen to the Prayers, and grant the reasonable Petitions of all those who by a Vertuous and Holy Life, do Demonstrate themselves his Sons and his Servants.

B

AFTER

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AFTER this, the First Petition relates chiefly, as in reason it ought to do, to that Adoration which we owe to the Great GOD, to that regard and respect which is due to every thing that bears his Holy Name, which in general may be Comprehended under the Word Religion: The particulars I propose to explain in the clearest manner, I shall mention every thing that is fairly contained in the Text, omitting such things as do not directly belong to this Petition.

Now the things immediately signified under the Name of GOD are Six in Number.

I. GOD himself.

II. RELIGION.

III. GOD's Ministers.

IV. THE Places for Divine Worship.

V. THE Bible.

VI. THE times for Divine Worship.

OF each of these in their Order.

IN

IN the First Place by the Name of GOD no doubt is meant GOD himself, for so the Spirit frequently speaketh in the Scripture: As for Instance in the Psalms — *The Name of the GOD of Jacob defend thee*; that is, may the GOD of our Fathers be thy Director, may he interpose in the time of Danger, and save thee from thine Enemys. Now to Hallow, or Sanctifie, or Glorifie GOD himself, which Words do in a manner mean the same thing, properly signifies, that we should pay all the Veneration and Worship that is possible, all that we are capable of, unto him that made us and all the World.

THIS consisteth chiefly in Three things: First in our thinking on the Divine Nature, not in a Free and Familiar manner, but with Fear, and Admiration, and awful Reverence; in our avoiding all curious inquiries about mysterious Subjects known only unto GOD, such as Original Sin and Predestination; for how can it be expected, that Human Reason, which every Day is imposed upon, deceiving and being deceived, is a Faculty, fitting, proper, or sufficient, to dive into, to explain, and comprehend the greatest, the

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most deep, the most difficult of all Subjects.

WE likewise do glorifie GOD himself, when we return him Thanks for the common Blessings of this Life, and for particular Mercys upon special occasions: And this is plainly our reasonable Duty, because none of us pretends to have given himself a Being; therefore we ought of course to be grateful to the Author of it, neither is any Man so vain as to engage to live Just so long as himself please, therefore Thanksgiving is certainly due to that kind Omnipotent Power, who continues to us Life and Breath and all things we enjoy.

THIS Duty, in the 3^d place, is Exercised when we Pray unto GOD for those necessary things which we stand in need of: And this we are likewise by Nature taught and enclined to do; for our own Reason convinceth and persuadeth us, that it is of the very essence of every good Being to love and take care of their own, what is derived from them, what they themselves are the cause of; therefore Almighty GOD cannot be supposed to forget any Creature he hath made, Man
more

more especially, whom we may conclude to be ordained for great and noble ends, being so wonderfully framed in his Body, and endowed with many more excellent Facultys in his Mind than can be discern'd in the rest of the Creation.

AND, since GOD is the Creator of the Body as well as the Soul, we ought in all Religious Exercises to worship him with the one as well as the other: This is done by using such kind of Gestures and Behaviour, as either naturally of themselves or else by the Custom of the Country where we live, are tokens of Humility: Namely Silence of Attention, Modesty of Countenance, bowing of the Head, and bending of the Knee: Neither is it superstitious in our private Devotion, to proceed yet farther in our Submission, but we may make use of the most profound marks of Adoration, such as the lifting up of the Eyes, Smiting on the Brest, and Prostration on the Ground: From him we receive all the good things we enjoy, can then any thing be too much to express our gratitude, him we daily provoke and offend can any action be too lowly to testify our Repentance?

THE

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THE second thing comprehended under the Name of GOD is *Religion*, and in particular the *Christian Religion*: Now with respect to this Article, the substance of our Praying is this, that the Holy Doctrine of Christ, being beyond all Comparison the purest upon the Earth, may likewise become of the largest extent, may be Planted in more Countrys, and professed by more Nations than any other: It is natural for every Man to desire the spreading, the increase of that Faith, which he is convinced in his Soul is of all other the best, to covet to behold the true Religion flourish in the World.

NOW considering the present State of Christianity, there is the greatest reason for us to pray heartily, both for the Planting, the Restoring, and Maintaining the Light of the Gospel. We may soon call to mind with sorrow, how that in many populous, rich, and otherwise happy Countrys, there is not a Christian: That very Land once hallow'd even by our Saviour's Blessed Feet is at this time Prophaned, where the Apostles wrought many Miracles, where Churches did arise out of the Blood of Martyrs, there Ma-
homet

homet is now worshipped, and the Cross of CHRIST is had in derision.

THEREFORE if we have a Value for our Religion, we cannot but pray, that the same may be Glorified, or receive Honour by the Conversion of the Heathens. How the Heathen are now likely to be Converted, is not easy to conceive, to Man indeed it seems impossible; because that those means whereby the Apostles gloriously triumphed over Idolatry, those means which no Infidel could resist, are long since ceased from the Christian Church, I mean the Gift of Miracles, which we do all know was the chief Instrument at the first in Converting of the Heathens: I say it hath pleased GOD that Miracles are ceased, notwithstanding there seems to be the same necessity for them now in Planting the Gospel amongst Barbarians: There remains in many Countrys the very same Ignorance of a future State, the same Cruelty in Religious Offices, the same worship of Idols and Devils as in the Days of the Apostles.

NOW, whereas it may seem too bold a request to pray in Terms for the Restoring of Miracles, yet let not the Lord be
angry

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angry if we desire from him such Gifts and Graces of his Holy Spirit as may answer the same Glorious ends, as may fulfil the Prophecy of Christs having the Heathen for his Inheritance: Namely, that GOD would powerfully touch the Hearts of Pagan Kings and Princes, in favour of Christianity, that they would not be led meerly by Education, but would hear with Patience the Arguments that can be brought in behalf of our Religion; in order thereunto, that he would bestow a high degree of Wisdom on those Men who hazzard their Lives to Publish the Gospel: In particular, a firm belief of those Doctrines they would recommend to others, Health of Body, a convincing way of Reasoning, sweetness of Temper and Innocence of Life; a perfect Faith in GOD, and Reliance on Divine Providence, and, in the end, a noble contempt of Death when called regularly to Suffer for the sake of Christ Jesus.

THIS naturally leads me to the third thing contained in the Text, that is the Preachers of the Gospel, who in especial manner bear the Name of Christ, as they are sent in his Name, and do Baptize in his Name.

Name. They ought to discharge their Duty with Zeal and Gravity, not delighting to handle curious and unnecessary Subjects, but are to labour after the Reformation of Manners, and the Quiet of the World.

THE People must remember that a regard is due to the Order, abstracted from the Men, in that they are indeed the Successors of the Apostles, how unequal soever in Knowledge and Utterance, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost. This regard must be expressed in our attention to their Ministry, not for curiosity, or on purpose to find fault, but with a sincere desire to be assisted, admonished, and directed in the way to Happiness: We are to consider the usefulness of this Order, that without them Religion itself would perish from the Earth, the best of Men are too apt to decline from their Duty, we all want to be put in remembrance, do require Line upon Line and Precept upon Precept, therefore *except these abide in the Ship ye cannot be saved.* It is likewise a difficult Office, so to speak as the Oracles of GOD, to censure Vice and Wickedness, without being supposed to intend particular Persons:

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Since then the Office is so necessary it ought to be encouraged, since it is so difficult we are to blame to be severe upon their Miscarriages, to spy out their Liberty, and enlarge their Infirmities; GOD'S Ministers often meet with Tryals and Provocations from an ungrateful World: Why Marvel ye at this, that Oppression doth sometimes discover their failings? seeing even the Apostles themselves were Men of like Passions.

THE Fourth thing fairly implied in the Text, is those Places set apart for the Worship of GOD, which, all the World over, do bear his Adorable Name, even the Church wherein I have now the Honour to speak, wherein we are Assembled: Now our Churches may then say'd to be Hallow'd, or used with due respect, when we do these things following. That is to say, when we prepare ourselves at Home, before we come hither, by Privacy and Retirement, by Reading and Meditation. In this Holy Place, when we make a beginning with short Ejaculations for a Blessing on our Pious intentions; when we withdraw our Thoughts, as much as is possible, from the Affairs of the World; when we do

do not delight in Ceremonies expressed one towards another; when we are in Charity with those who have done us an Injury; are prepared to Forgive whenever they sincerely repent of the Wrongs they have committed. These are general Rules for hallowing the Church, for edifying in it. The particular ones may be these.

THAT we consent and agree not to some of the Prayers only, but to all in general, making no Difference or Distinction. Whoever by rude Actions expresseth his dislike, deserves sharply to be rebuked. This is a publick Mocking of the rest of the Congregation, who are not of such inconsistent Principles: It is an open avowing of our Dissatisfaction. How can these Men reconcile it to their Consciences, to give such a mighty Interruption even to their own Devotion? How can such a peculiar and sudden change of their Temper and Behaviour, consist with pretences to Piety and Zeal for the Church? So bold a Freedom and Liberty was never heard of before in any Place of Religious Worship.

WE are then to listen to the Minister,

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ster, to weigh and observe the Sense of the Collects, which Men find fault with for being short, because they do not consider how full they are and comprehensive. At the Reading of the Chapters, we are to apply the Contents to ourselves not to others, we must avoid or repent of those things which are forbidden in the Scriptures, and imitate those Vertues which GOD hath approved of throughout all Ages. When the Litany is read, let our Hearts go along with every Sentence; no Danger can be imagined either from our Sins, or our Infirmitys, from GOD's Judgments, from Men or Devils, or from outward Accidents, but what is there Pray'd against in proper Expressions, all Blessings are there comprised that we can desire or stand in need of, in Affliction or Poverty, Life or Death, here or hereafter, Blessings to our Religion in general, or the Church in particular, to our Kings and our Priests, for all sorts of Men, that they may Discharge their Duty to GOD, be unblamable in their Lives, and reverence his Sanctuary; all Temporal good things are included, his Rain or his Sunshine, the Dew from Heaven and the Fertility of the Earth.

IN the Prayers I would especially discourage one Practice too common amongst us, I mean any Mans repeating a loud, or indeed at all, the Absolution, together with the Minister, this is not barely a mistake but a wilful Crime; for is it not plain enough, in the Rubrick or Directions in the Common Prayer, *that the Absolution is to be Pronounced by the Priest alone*, not by the People: And this Order of the Church, is not founded meerly on the pleasure of the Compilers of our Liturgy, but it depends Absolutely upon the Everlasting Gospel itself, wherein it is very manifest, that there is an Order of Men appointed for ever, to Bless the People in Christ's Name, that no Man ought to take this Honour to himself, but he that is called of GOD, as was *Aaron*; that they cannot Preach except they be sent; that Christ's Ministers do represent his Person, and act by his Authority; and, in particular, these Men alone, and no others, have a Power and Commandment to declare and Pronounce the Absolution and Remission of Sins to all those who truly Repent. It was to the Apostles, apart by themselves, not to the Multitude in General, that our Saviour gave this Commission,

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mission, to Preach Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins, to go into all the World; on them he Breathed forth the Holy Ghost, saying, whatsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven, whosesoever Sins ye remit they are remitted unto them; whosesoever Sins ye retain they are retained.

NOW the People ought with more readiness to Obey this Order of Christ and of his Church, since the Divine Service of the Church of England, is so wisely framed, as to gratifie Mens natural Inclinations of bearing some part in the Publick Exercise and Offices of Religion; in that the Congregation is required to read the Psalms, and the other Hymns, in alternate manner together with the Minister; to repeat several short but very significant Responses, not in the daily Service alone, but likewise when the Ten Commandments are read, and at the Celebration of the Holy Communion; and constantly to answer Amen at the ending of the Prayers: In these particulars they are exhorted to speak and not hold their Peace.

NOW, as I would discourage the saying

ing the Absolution, which is invading the Priests Office, and was never allowed in the Primitive Church, so would to GOD I could revive and encourage another Practice, common then amongst the People, for which they will be Honour'd throughout all Ages; and that is, their fervent hearty, devout manner of saying *Amen* to the Publick Prayers. You may have a notion of their Piety and Zeal in this respect, when you are told, that their *Amen* was so loud that it resembled a Clap of Thunder, it was like the fall of many Waters into the Sea down from a Precipice.

THE fifth Thing comprehended in the Text, is that Holy Book which is called by the Name of GOD, and contains his revealed Will and Pleasure, all those things which a Christian ought to know and Believe for his Souls Health. Now the paying a due respect to the Scriptures may be done thus; when we accept and study the Bible, as a plain, full, and sufficient Rule, to direct all our actions in this Life, and to bring us safe to the Kingdom of Heaven: Therefore we must by no means apply the Phrases to an Idle meaning, or use them

on

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on common Occasions, for our Diversi-
on, in compliance to the Pretended Wit-
of a sinful Generation: Sure I am, if
any Book in the World deserves to be
treated with regard, it must be that
Book whereon our Eternal Salvation de-
pends.

THERE are some Passages difficult to
understand, but this often proceeds from
our Ignorance of the Original, of an-
cient Customs, and the Forms of speak-
ing in several Countreys, which makes
many Expressions seem strange and unna-
tural: Neither is this peculiar to the
Bible only, for we meet with the like
obscurity in the very best ancient Wri-
ters in all Ages, and upon all Subjects,
and this to such a degree, that many
times the most learned Interpreters differ
and contradict one another, the Exposi-
tion is darker than the Text; and as
for those few hard Places in the Scrip-
ture, they affect no Doctrine, they sel-
dom alter the general Sense of any Sub-
ject, GOD will never call us to an ac-
count for our Ignorance in the matter,
the knowing of these is no part of our
Duty; every Branch whereof is so clear
that he who runs may read: These
things

BUT, we shall find on the other Hand, that if we delight to make remarks on the Bible, to find fault with such Phrases that do not sound agreeable to our nice Ears, this Vanity will grow upon us, we shall then shut our Eyes to the Infinite flights of Eloquence in Holy Scripture; then the Sublime Writing of *Moses*, the many Raptures, and Beautys, and Varieties in the *Psalms*, in *Job*, and the Prophet *Isaiah*, the Divine Style wherewith St. *John* begins his Gospel, these and all other Excellencies in the Word of GOD, will be

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sighted

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slighted or derided, and every sorry Writer will be more esteemed by us, than those Men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

THE last Thing I shall mention, comprehended in the Hallowing GOD's Name, is those times set apart for his Service, in particular the Sabbath or the Lord's Day.

THIS Day was appointed not meerly to rest from our Labours, but for a time wherein to Compose our Minds, to have an Eye upon our Spiritual Affairs: Therefore we ought not to excuse ourselves from entring the House of GOD; must adjust and set right every kind of difference betwixt our Souls and him that made us; it is ordained on purpose that we may have leisure, and a fixed time, to examine ourselves in private; and opportunity in publick of being Partakers of the means to bring us to Repentance, that we might implore forgiveness for the Sins of the past Week, and a Blessing on the Week ensuing: So that if any Man be a constant Breaker of the Sabbath, doth never Worship his Maker on this Day, when,

when, wherever he goes, our Churches are open, and in many Places our Altars are prepared, let not such a one take to himself the Name of a Christian, he is in effect no better than an Infidel: The reason is evident, for if Men have never so slight a Notion of a GOD, they cannot possibly think that less Honour is due unto him than one Day in seven at least, to adore him; therefore whilst they continually prophane the Sabbath, is it rash to conclude concerning such Persons, that they never Worship GOD at all, neither believe nor practise any Dutys in Religion?

WOULD any of us therefore do our part towards the Hallowing the Name of GOD, towards the fulfilling the Petition in my Text, this is our Duty in few Words.

REMEMBER the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy, for it is called expressly by St. *John* the Lord's Day; herein, we are devoutly to serve GOD, to be Charitable to others, and to work out our own Salvation. Frequently read the Bible with an Intention to Practice, affect not doubtful Disputations, leave the dif-

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faculties to them whose Function it is to open the Scriptures. Give your Attendance in the Church, as a Place where the Angels of GOD are resident, not in the familiarities of an Exchange or a Market. Look upon your Ministers as sent by Christ, respect them for their Works sake, account it reasonable for them to live by the Gospel. Adorn the Christian Religion with your lives, the properest Expedient, next to Miracles, or converting the Heathens. Never mention the Name of GOD in a light manner, in Swearing and Cursing, but stand in awe of him in your Hearts, and both in private and publick Pray unto him,

F I N I S.

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